WESTWORDS

Westwords

Volume 6 Number 2

January, 1964

A quarterly of student writing published
by Mount St. Mary's College
Los Angeles, California

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Epiphany

Epiphany is manifestation, and Epiphany is gift. Our gifts to you on this Epiphany are multi-form. Our manifestations come from medieval architecture, from fantasy, and even from psychology, as interpreted by writers at Mount St. Mary's.

This issue, Westwords encompasses medieval literature, architecture and philosophy in Pat Smith's prize-winning essay, "Parallels in Poetry and Stone," and modern realism in Vickie Branch's "The Christmas Party." Diane deAnda once again presents fantasy in "The Three Unfortunate Kings," while Jane Tess Davis explores Eliot's techniques in her poem, "Timelessness." Jane Luecke's "If It Weren't for the Sugar I've Been Cravin'" took Atlantic and Cabrini honors, and appears with "Just High Enough the Walls," by Michelle Lundborg--both are stories with a strong psychological bent. T. Jeanette Kroger again writes in sonnet form, while Mary Ann Stocker chooses the English ballad tradition for her "Come, My Son."

These are our Epiphany gifts to you.

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The Child

Coldness crystallized the air,

And a young woman wondered at the life
held in her arms;

Not because he was the expected One,

But merely that he was small, warm,
and pressed against her.

Mary Ann Stocker

Growing Pains

The downward thrust of youth
aimed toward death,
toyed with life,
tripped and fell,
revived itself
just in time to age.

Judy Wiczek

Parallels in Poetry and Stone

Patricia Smith

"'Cum pondere et mensura,' Dante raised his invisible cathedral. With St. Thomas he was the great architect of the thirteenth century."[1] These two sentences draw three significant parallels between what many authorities consider the greatest achievements of medieval man: *The Divine Comedy*, the Gothic cathedral, and the *Summa*. Three men in three different fields are linked in a common bond of greatness through their common skills. Yet what does Dante, an Italian poet, share with a theologian or an architect? How can poetry and theology produce a cathedral?

To investigate these apparent paradoxes, I will compare Dante's *Comedy* with the cathedral at Amiens, which is "the Parthenon of Gothic Architecture." I will base this comparison on the three requirements of beauty proposed in the *Summa*: unity, variety, and radiance.[2] For, "artistic representation... was a science governed by fixed laws" --the laws of St. Thomas.[3] His law of unity demands that the content of the work of art be structured in uniform divisions. Variety is the profusion and relationships of truths embodied in the single work. And, radiance pertains to the significance or splendor expressed implicitly and explicitly through the form. As I will now show, both the poet and the architect followed this "theology of art" which formed that common bond between them.[4]

Together *The Comedy* and the cathedral at Amiens are monuments to artistic unity. Dante's poetic order and precision is concretized in the cadence of arches and buttresses. The cross-section of a single cathedral pier relates the organization of the entire edifice.[5] Unity stands and speaks.

[1]Emile Male, *The Gothic Image*, trans. Dora Nussy (New York: Harper and Bros. 1958), p. 13.

[2]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol. II: i, q. 39, a. 8, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1921) p. 147.

[3]Male, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 50-51.

The structural unity of Dante's edifice is founded on the Trinitarian form of the *Summa*.[6] Accordingly, Dante divides *The Comedy* into three main books, the Inferno, the Purgatorio, and the Paradiso. Each of these books is then divided into thirty-three cantos, and each canto subdivided into terza rima stanzas. Thus, for example, Dante tells the story of Francesca da Rimini in rhyming triplets:

> Siede la terra dove nata fui,
> Sulla marina dove il Po discende
> Per aver pace co' seguaci sui.
>
> Amor, che al cor gentil ratte s'apprende,
> Prese costui della bella persona
> Che mi fu tolta, e il modo ancor m' offende.[8]

The stanzas about her form one canto of the thirty-four which described the lost souls. The lost souls, of course, are contained in one of three books about all souls, the Inferno.

Dante carries the Trinitarian pattern still further in organizing his three worlds or "states of souls after death".[9] Each world consists of nine levels (nine, a derivative of three) and, therefore, the nine circles of Hell correspond with the nine terraces of Purgatory and the nine heavens of Paradise.[10] Often too, the characters and symbols of each world appear in three's. In the opening canto of the poem three animals approach the pilgrim Dante on the Mount of Innocence. Later in Hell, three blasts come from the three heads of Satan, and, then, in the next world, Dante climbs three steps to enter the Gate of Purgatory. Finally, in the closing canto of the poem, "...three circles of three colors" radiate from "the great light" of the Beatific Vision.[11] These are only a few of the countless examples which prove the significance of three as a unifying agent.

The perfect unity in Gothic architecture is likewise structured on Thomistic principles. Like the poem, Amiens is divided into three main parts: the nave, the transept, and the chevet. Each of these parts, in turn, is divided and subdivided into smaller parts. The nave or main body of the cathedral is com-

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[7] There are actually thirty-four cantos in the Inferno, but the first one is the introduction.

[8] Dante Alighieri, *Le Opere di Dante Alighieri*, compiled by Moore and Toynbee (Oxford: Nella Stamperia Dell' Universita, 1924), 9:69.

[9] Wicksteed (trans.), "Epistola X to Can Grande della Scala."

[10] Male, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

[11] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. H.R. Huse (New York: Walt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), p. 480. All other quotations from this edition will be cited by canto and line.

posed of the high nave and two side aisles. The transept crosses the nave in a cruciform fashion and includes the crossing, where the nave and the transept meet, and the continuation of the two aisles. Finally, the choir, ambulatory, and radiating chapels form the chevet or the area of the high altar.[12]

The number three and its derivatives occur many times in the cathedral, as they do in the poem. For example, the nave wall is composed of three ascending sections, the arcade, the triforium, and the clerestory.[13] This three-part interior elevation is, in turn, reflected in the exterior arrangement of the west facade. Furthermore, the lower story of this facade consists of three portals, grouped together in one unit. Significantly enough, these portals are arranged in a triangular form, with the arch of the central door higher than the other two arches.

Yet, the perfect unity of *The Comedy* and Amiens does not end with a disciplined structure. In both cases, the artists must order the content within the shell as brilliantly as the shell itself. They must answer the Thomistic requirements in every respect.

Dante's answer is the universal journey symbol. He reveals the content of his work, "the state of souls after death," through the journeying pilgrim, who represents the poet himself. Literally, Dante travels down into the abyss of hell, through the gate of Purgatory, and heavenward to the Empyrean. He feels the infernal heat of the burning sands and the boiling pitch in Satan's city. He experiences the "goads" and "checks" on the terraces of Purgatory and marvels at the revolving heavens of paradise. Figuratively, Dante ventures through the inner realms of the soul, through time and reality, through past sinfulness, present retribution, and future sanctity. But, whether literally or figuratively, the poem's content--its symbols and images, its characters and action, its meaning--unfolds only within the bounds of Dante's timeless journey.

The Gothic architect also followed a journey pattern in organizing the content, or iconography, of his work. Like Dante, he leads the pilgrim, his observer, through life and time,

[12]Panofsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

[13]*Ibid.*, p.48.

toward ultimate union with God. His journey, however, does not grow, as Dante's does. It has not the flowing action of a word-by-word creation, but rather the static action of a huge mural.

For example, the vast array of sculpture on the west facade of Amiens cinemascopes the history of man's relationship with God, his striving for the Eternal. The three great portals tell separate phases of this history in a single span of stone. Furthermore, these portals symbolize past, present, and future, and, therefore, correspond with time in Dante's worlds. In viewing the right portal, the observer journeys into man's past communion with God. There in the arch scene above the door, figures of Mary and Gabriel enact the Incarnation. Below them life-size statues of the prophets remind the pilgrim of man's anxiety for and God's promise of redemption. A chain of small images on the base then stress this reminder by depicting Old Testament events.[14]

Past flows into present, as the observer's journey continues in the left portal of the facade. The iconography before him now represents man as redeemed and earning the benefit of his redemption, Paradise. Thus, the main arch figure of St. Firmin, the patron saint of Amiens, and his court of local saints below, signify the Church Militant on earth. At the base of this portal, the pilgrim also finds the "Works and Days", represented by the signs of the zodiac and the labors of the month. These small images were designed to show him the necessity of labor for salvation and the cycle of the Christian year.[15]

Present flows into future, as the perfect unity of the whole culminates in the central portal. Here, the observer is drawn into the church by the Teaching Christ, who stands on a pedestal between the divided doors. The Twelve Apostles and the early precursors of Christ surrounding the pedestal also greet the new arrival. Again small images appear at the base of the doorway, this time portraying the conflict of virtues with with vices. This portal and the Teaching Christ have now prepared the pilgrim for the journey's end. For, high in the arch scene above the door, the Triumphant Christ sits in glory at the Last Judgment. The Blessed Mother and St. John, the Seraphim and the Cherubim, encircle His throne, and columns of

[14] Male, *op. cit.*, pp. 150, 162.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 308, 68.

small figures receive His decision. Here the pilgrim observer is promised union with God, as the pilgrim Dante is promised it in the Paradiso.[16] Thus, both Dante and the architect of Amiens erect their monuments to unity "in perfectly Scholastic fashion."[17]

If the thirteenth-century was a century of uniformity, "of clarification for clarification's sake," it was also "the century of encyclopedias,"[18] wherein all human knowledge was consolidated in "the one perfect and final solution."[19] Unlike the twentieth-century specialist, the medieval scholar, the Dante or Aquinas or Suger, excelled in many fields of learning. Consequently, the medieval works of art and scholarship "sought to embody the whole of Christian knowledge."[20] Variety was a requisite for greatness. While St. Thomas was raising the intellectual edifice of the time, his encyclopedic *Summa*, Dante and the architects of Amiens were raising its counterparts in poetry and stone.[21]

The variety of thought and expression compressed in *The Comedy* is, perhaps, unparalleled in Western literature. In its presentation, for instance, *The Comedy* embodies a maximum of literary forms. It is a poem having the epic stature of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Its many episodes resemble separate short stories, and each canto is a poem in itself. Once more, characters much as Filippe Argenti, enact the angry dream of the inner self on the stages of hell. Dante also anticipated the modern novel by six hundred years, for he wrote "a long, fictional narrative with a sustained plot." Finally, biographies, Dante's autobiography, histories, and various scholarly discourses, all combine in an anthology of literary forms. Dante accents this collection of forms by using countless literary devices. Symbolism, images, dialogue, irony, and understatement are a few among many of his tools.

The actual content of *The Comedy* is the primary proof of Dante's achievement in variety. Within the vast scope of his work, the poet assembles representatives from all the fields of learning known to medieval man, Ptolemaic astronomy determines the entire setting, and Dante's geography embraces

16*Ibid.*, pp. 44, 368, 372.

17Panofsky *op. cit.*, p. 36.

18Male, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

19Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

20*Ibid.*, p. 44.

21Male, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

northern Italy. The laws of physics explain the divine plan and dictate the mystical movement of the heavens. Music resounds in the Primum Mobile, while mythology provides her Muses and her store of legends. History traces the successors of Peter, the rise and fall of Rome, and events in Florence. Political science then supplements her facts by examining government operation and corruption-in-high-places. Philosophy lights Dante on his journey, and psychology develops his character.

The most prominent representatives of Dante's versatility, however, are from the field of religion. The first, Revelation, furnishes Dante's theme, his plot, the three states of the after-life, the major characters, and innumerable incidents and symbols. In short, Revelation makes *The Comedy* divine. The second representative, theology, complements the first. Theological studies of the Trinity, for instance, or of free will or divine justice pervade the Paradiso, while Christian morality gives the poem its purpose.

Scholars have summarized Dante's profusion of truths by proclaiming *The Comedy* an encyclopedia of the knowledge of the Middle Ages. Thus, the poet rivalled St. Thomas, who "co-ordinated the whole body of Christian doctrine", in answering the second Scholastic requirement.[22]

The cathedral of Amiens is the visible expression of Dante's invisible variety. Its structural design echoes the multi-form presentation of *The Comedy*, for it synthesizes all the major motifs of previous centuries. The medieval architect borrowed the basilica draft from the Romans as a pattern for his Gothic nave. However, he balanced this nave with the transept from the Greek cross of the Eastern central-plan. The medieval compass then suppressed all superfluous elements of the separate motifs and erected the "final solution".[23]

Profusion and correlation are even more apparent in the iconography of Amiens. Returning to its western portals, we find that their crystallized journey through time is also a journey through human knowledge. The sculptured guides of the observer's journey are also the learned representatives of Dante's assembly. Scripture, science, history, all gather in a silent, stone portrayal of medieval learning.

Dante's leading representatives, Revelation and theology, are also foremost at Amiens. The New Testament inspired most of the artists' statues and reliefs. The life of Mary on the right

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[23] Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

portal, and the Teaching Christ, His Apostles, and the Last Judgment on the central portal are directly from the Gospels. Likewise, the Old Testament influence provided the sculptured prophets on both portals and many of the images on the base. Because theology depends on Scripture, its various dogmas are inherent in this iconography. Among other doctrines the sculptors depict the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the resurrection of the body.

Other representatives also add to the panorama of the portals. Astrology pictures the signs of the zodiac, while "frozen music" groups the statues in perfect harmony.[24] Current history supplies St. Firmin and the local saints, and, finally, mathematics orders the entire facade with geometric precision. As "Victor Hugo says: 'In the Middle Ages men had no great thought that they did not write down in stone.' "[25]

The third Thomistic principle completes the artistic perfection of *The Comedy* and Amiens by "shining on the proportioned parts of matter."[26] Radiance gives life to unity and variety by giving implicit meaning to explicit expression. In order to understand its role in art, we must remember that the whole world was a symbol to medieval man.[27] He believed that it is "a book written by the hand of God in which every creature is a word charged with meaning."[28] As St. Thomas says, "'...it is the peculiar property of the science (revelation) that the actual things signified by the words have themselves a further significance.' "[29] Accordingly, Dante's *Comedy* is polysemous, for, as he says, "it is one sense which we get through the letter, and another which we get through the thing the letter signifies."[30] Because "the cathedral was the sum of revelation" for the medieval man, it also echoed the "peculiar property" or or senses of Scripture.[31] Therefore, by giving meaning to form

[24]Male, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[25]Victor Hugo, as quoted in Male, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

[26]Jacques Maritain, as quoted in *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J.F. Scanlan (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943), from *Opusc, de Pulchre et Bonno*. This statement is attributed to Albertus Magnus and sometimes to St. Thomas Aquinas.

[27]Male, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[28]*Ibid.*

[29]St. Thomas Aquinas, as quoted in Elred Whitacre, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1925), p. 134.

[30]Wicksteed, *op. cit.*

[31]Male, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

through Scripture, Dante and the architect obeyed the Thomistic demand of radiance.

In *The Comedy* rays of meaning shine, first of all, through the structural design, wherein the numerical divisions reflect the number mysticism of the times. The principal number, three, symbolizes the Divine Trinity and each of the thirty-three cantos represent the thirty-three years of Christ's life.[32] As I have already mentioned, the pilgrim's journey also projects literal and allegorical significance. It is both a roadmap and a moral lesson.

Two-fold meaning extends still further in the content of *The Comedy*. There are numerous examples of this fact, but I will only discuss the Christ symbols and the symbol of light.

Dante's final vision of the "Eternal Light" of Christ in the Trinity is preceded by minor figures representing Christ. For example, on the terrace of anger in Purgatory, the pilgrim sees a youth being stoned by a violent mob. In the literal sense this scene is merely a tragic spectacle accenting Dante's journey. In the allegorical sense, however, it represents St. Stephen whose suffering symbolizes the passion of Christ. As Dante says:

> And I saw him whom death already burdened
> sink to the earth with eyes
> which still gazed on Heaven,
>
> praying to God in his agony
> and with a look that unlocks pity
> that He might pardon his persecutors (16:109-14).

Again in Purgatory, on the terrace of gluttony, the pilgrim starts at "...a tree with wholesome and sweet fruit (22:130)." Its literal presence and beauty bears a deeper meaning, for "a voice within the leaves shouted/ 'You will have a dearth of food! (22:140-1)' " The tree signifies the Christ in the Gospels, who said, "I am the vine, you are the branches," and also "Take and eat, for this is my Body."

Beatrice, Dante's guide and inspiration, is the most striking symbol of Christ. She is much more than feminine mystery and beauty when she appears in the Garden of Eden. Her glorious descent on the chariot in a pageant of song and light and color mirrors Christ's Second Coming in the Apocalypse. The angels

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

confirm this symbolic meaning when they address her as they would Christ with the masculine form of "Benedictus" (30:19).

Dante also reveals "...a truth hidden under a beautiful fiction" in his symbolic use of light.[33] The moment the poet-pilgrim leaves the darkness of Dis and arrives on the shore of Purgatory, the "heavens seemed to rejoice in their light" (1:25). He sees "the cheeks/of beautiful Aurora" (2:7-8), and watches "the approach of morning" as "Mars shines through the thick mist" (2:13-14). As he climbs the Mount of Purgatory, however, the brightness around him intensifies, until "a light suddenly flashed/everywhere... (29:16-17)" and the "air...became like a flaming fire" (29:34-35). By this stage in his journey, the pilgrim has been purged of his vices and awaits forgiveness from Beatrice. The literal increase of light, therefore, symbolizes his growth in grace and advance toward God.

Dante then ascends from Eden to the starry domain of Paradise. As he rises from heaven-to-heaven toward the Empyrean, brightness magnifies and overwhelms him. Purgatory is less than a shadow now, as he stands beatified in the light of glory. Here "radiance in the form of a river"(39:61) swirls into the Mystical Rose, where the "Eternal Light" Itself radiates "...three circles of three colors/and of one dimension... (33:16-17)." Light is God, and Dante has "...attained the Infinite Worth" (33:81).

The Scholastic splendor of *The Comedy* is also captured in Amiens, where floorplan and stained glass and sculpture "have themselves a further significance." For example, early Christian mysticism determined the position of the structure in relation to the sun. Accordingly, the rising sun shines on the high altar, while the setting sun illumines the Last Judgment on the west facade. The cold, dark area of the north porch pictures Old Testament scenes, and the warm south porch glows with those from the New. Symbolic import is also attached to the symmetry of Amiens. On the west facade twelve virtues oppose twelve vices, five Wise Virgins oppose five Foolish Virgins, and each sign of the zodiac opposes each labor of the month. Thus, the observer learns a moral lesson by comparing good and evil and the heavenly realms with the earthly realms.[34]

The quality of radiance is even more apparent in the cathedral's iconography. Many, in fact, most of the sculptures project both literal and allegorical meaning. For instance, the

[33]Wicksteed, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

[34]Male, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 9, 68, 109, 198, 306, 307.

Old Testament figures in the south porch of Amiens symbolize Christ just as Beatrice does in *The Comedy*. Adam, the first figure, is portrayed because Christ came to earth as the second Adam to redeem mankind. The next figure, Noah, is building his ark, as Christ built the ark of His Church. Melchisedech follows holding the bread and wine which foreshadowed Christ's passion and the Eucharist. Then, Isaac, Abraham's sacrificial victim, images Christ's own sacrifice on the cross. Thus, the observer can admire the exterior beauty of the statues before him, and also appreciate a deeper beauty from their inner brilliance.[35]

Allegory crescendos in the stained-glass and soaring piers of Amiens. Arches point heavenward and "stained-glass windows shut out wind and rain..." and let "the splendor of the True Light pass into the church (to) enlighten those within."[36] Thus, the ceiling fades in a flood of light and color, just as the limits of matter and time fade in the Empyrean. The most brilliant rays, however, pour through the great rose windows high on the walls. Here, "Eternal Light" penetrates the glass fragments as it does the petals of Dante's Mystical Rose. Again, boundless space and light symbolize "the Infinite Worth."

Thus, unity, variety, and radiance form parallels in poetry and stone. *The Comedy* is Dante's "invisible cathedral" and the cathedrals are "works of true poetry."[37]

[35]*Ibid.*, pp. 153-155.

[36]Adapted by Helen Gardner, *Art Through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959) from Hugues de St. Victor, *Speculum de mysteriis ecclesiae, Sermo II.*

[37]Male, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

The Cat Who Missed His Whiskers

Mr. and Mrs. Mc Fagle found Orson on the corner of Whippoorwill and Bush-Tail Streets. Mr. Mc Fagle stopped the car to buy the *Sunnyville Herald*. Orson was crouched between two of Mr. Gropple's newspaper stands. He looked like a normal cat from a distance. He was gravel grey and had two or three normal-sized white cat-spots near his tail and above his back paws. Mr. Mc Fagle opened the right door to get the latest *Sunnyville Herald* and Orson jumped in uninvited. Mrs. Mc Fagle was the first to notice it. Poor Orson flopped on Mrs. Mc Fagle's lap and began to shiver. But he shivered in a way which certainly was not at all cat-like. He shook only on the right side of his face. Thinking that this was terribly odd, Mrs. Mc Fagle looked closely at the right side of Orson's face. Poor Orson. He had absolutely no whiskers on the right side of his cat-face. He shivered because he had no whiskers to protect him from the wind.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Mc Fagle knew that this was no normal cat and looked sadly at Orson's unusual face.

Mr. Mc Fagle drove around the corner of Whippoorwill and Bush-Tail Streets. Orson made himself comfortable and warmed the right side of his face in the folds of Mrs. Mc Fagle's corduroy raincoat. Mrs. Mc Fagle liked Orson immediately, despite his missing whiskers and she wrapped her coat tightly around him.

Mr. Mc Fagle spoke very quietly so that Orson couldn't hear: "But, dear, we already have one cat at home." The Mc Fagles had a normal cat named Fluff. Fluff had angel-white whiskers...on both sides of her face. Mrs. Mc Fagle pleaded a little: "But, dear, surely we must keep this poor cat. He can't stay between Mr. Gropple's newsstands forever." Mr. Mc Fagle didn't say anything. He just slid the *Sunnyville Herald* over the front seat and patted the right side of Orson's head.

The Mc Fagle's car stopped in front of their home on Bush-Tail Street. Orson rubbed the whiskered side of his face against Mr. Mc Fagle's arm. It was his very tactful way of saying: "May I become a member of your wonderful family?" Mrs. Mc Fagle let Orson rest in her arms and carried him in the house.

Virginia Speltz

Mrs. Mc Fagle introduced Orson to Fluff by letting them share a saucer of cream--whipping cream because it was a special occasion. Fluff, being a normal cat, noticed Orson's unusual face. She deliberately rubbed her angel-white whiskers against Orson's whiskerless cheek. Orson shivered a little.

A few days later, Orson and Fluff were playing with a ball of darning wool in the Mc Fagle's bedroom. Suddenly Fluff noticed that the fan was blowing the Mc Fagle's curtains. She knew that Orson couldn't come near anything windy. So she deliberately rolled the ball of wool near the fan and Orson followed it with his nose. Poor Orson! He was in another windy situation. First the right side of his face shook slightly. Then the right side of his body, down to his right back paw, began to shake. Finally, even his whiskered side shook terribly. His only whiskers looked as if they might fly off. Orson sneezed a cat-sneeze and slid quickly under Mrs. Mc Fagle's dressing table. The table had heavy ruffles at the bottom and Orson could nurse his chills alone.

Mrs. Mc Fagle saw what Fluff had done and she was quite disturbed indeed. She was puzzled too because she wanted to help Orson. Suddenly her face brightened and she hurried to the sewing machine. She began to cut some flannel in a square and then she cut some narrow flannel strings. In the meantime, Fluff was busy fluffing the fringe on Mrs. Mc Fagle's bedspread. She tried to look as angel-white as her whiskers.

Finally, Mrs. Mc Fagle finished her sewing. She held up her work and began to tie the strings around Orson's head. She had made Orson a very special flannel patch to cover the whiskerless side of his face.

Mr. Mc Fagle stopped reading his *Sunnyville Herald* just long enough to compliment Orson: "I think you look fine, Orson," he said. "You are the only cat in the world fortunate enough to have a flannel whisker patch." Mr. Mc Fagle lifted Orson up so he could see himself in the mirror. Orson looked at his new face and turned his face sideways a little so he could see all of his right side. He wouldn't shiver anymore and he was, indeed, a very special normal cat.

Fluff jumped up and pushed her whiskers against the mirror. Then she pretended to shiver and sneeze.

The Christmas Party

Vickie Branch

Blue and red neon lights made little arcs on the wet black fenders of the Triumph as it skidded up to the curb. The man got out of the car and walked around to the back to check the tree which was lashed in the half-open trunk. "Guess it's all right," he said to himself without enthusiasm. He felt a little ridiculous driving home with a Christmas tree hanging out of back. In the Buick it would have fit, and he could have closed the trunk. But now, everyone could see that he was carrying it, and that he was late because it was already Christmas Eve; and everyone would wonder why. One thing, for sure, he thought. They'd never guess.

He felt for the wallet in his pocket and walked into the liquor store. "Gift decanter of Seagram's V.O.," he said to the clerk.

"Righto."

The clerk reached up to the shelf marked Whiskey and pulled down a tall, squared box wrapped in mani-colored foil. "Goin' to a party?"

"Yeah. How much?"

"Five dollars and twenty-seven cents."

He looked in his wallet. "I'm a little short. All right if I write a check?"

"Do you trade here regularly?"

"No."

The clerk squinted at him, at the silk suit he was wearing, at the Triumph outside the door. "Aaah, go ahead. It's Christmas, isn't it?"

"Thanks." He bent over and wrote. "This place is called Tony's, isn't it?"

"Righto."

He tore the check out of the book and gave it to the clerk.

"Matthew Norton. Matt Norton, huh?"

"That's right."

"Didn't your wife used to come here?"

"What?" Matt stared at the clerk.

"Mrs. Matthew Norton. Blond with a big dog--boxer, I think. That your wife?"

"Yeah." Matt picked up the bag and started to leave.

"Nice woman. Don't see her any more," said the clerk. Matt kept on walking, and the clerk called after him, "Merry Christmas." Between the display cases of twenty-nine cent wine against the window, he could see the branches bounce in the rear as the engine started, and then they disappeared behind the red bottles.

* * * * *

Matt fit the key into the door and kicked it open. It was dark inside the apartment, and he felt his way over to the coffee table and put the packages down. Without finding a light switch, he went back out to the landing and rescued the Christmas tree from its precarious place on the carpeted stairs. He had to flick on a light now, so he could decide where to put the tree.

The clustered white bulbs glared beneath their cut glass covers and were reflected in large, silver-framed mirrors from every direction. Matt stood awkwardly in the midst of the brilliance, hating it all, perversely enjoying the stinging pricks of the tree's rough bark and needles.

It was too small a tree to put on the floor over in the corner. The arm of the sofa would all but hide it. Maybe that would be better, he smiled. No, can't malign Christmas. Not Christmas or Mother--America's sacred words. Where is a shrine for the Christmas tree and Mama?

The silver service was heavy, but there was something curiously pleasant about removing it from the mahogany sideboard. Ostentatious junk, that's what it is, he thought. It was Miss Anderson's idea to have it there. Maybe that's why he didn't like it.

He lifted the tree and set it on the sideboard, dusting the few falling needles onto the carpet with a sweep of his hand. Not bad, Matt. Not bad at all. Miss Anderson wouldn't approve. She wanted you to get a bigger tree. She said an advertising executive should have a bigger tree, so that when he entertained, people would see that he knew how to live the wonderful, capitalistic life he exalted every day. For a secretary, Miss Anderson had very big ideas, For a secretary, Miss Anderson had her nerve. If Miss Anderson doesn't want to be a secretary, maybe on the first of the year, she won't be.

Matt smiled and put the silver service in the cupboard under the kitchen sink. Well, that's a start, anyway.

He took off his jacket and hanged it in the hall closet. The pearl stick pin bounced against the velvet of his jewel box as he tossed it inside. The blue sulka tie joined the rainbow of others on the brass rack. The dacron shirt fell limply into the laundry hamper, and Matt stood barechested in his bedroom, wondering what a man would wear to an "at home" Christmas party. No, not what a man would wear. What an advertising executive would wear. Certainly not that comfortable terry cloth robe he found in Klein's. He should remove the label, at least, before he wore it.

Not the viyella hunting shirt Maggie bought him for their third--was it their fourth?--anniversary. It was too worn around the cuffs, and it smelled too musky and masculine. Advertising executives don't smell like that.

The British smoking jacket--that was the choice. It smelled of 47-11 and chocolate-flavored tobacco. He put it on and tied the sash. When he straightened up and looked in the mirror, he laughed. "First damn advertising exec I ever saw looking like Sir Laurence Olivier," he said aloud. "Oh, my dear, dear Miss Anderson. THIS you should see."

Oh, and the pipe. Where had he put the pipe Miss Anderson had given him at the office party Friday? He looked around for the little brown box, and then he shrugged and went into the kitchen. "What to drink? Gin? No," he answered himself. "This is Christmas. We must have egg nog."

He cracked and beat the eggs, added the cream, the brandy, the rum, and sprinkled on the nutmeg. He ladled the foamy mixture into a crystal cup and tasted it. "Not as good as yours, Maggie. Not quite."

He wiped some of the foam off his upper lip where it had made a moustache and returned to the living room.

The Baroque clock on the mantle chimed eleven times. Matt set his drink down beside it and picked up a large set from the floor. The lid was sooty, and beneath the black grains was written "Christmas Ornaments" in a woman's careful scroll--worthy writing. He set it on the dining table and removed the lid. Underneath a thick blanket of cotton rested the red and gold balls. One by one he took them out, alternating colors, and fastened them to the tree on the sideboard. The thin boughs

drooped from their weight, and the tree looked overladen before he had emptied a third of the box. He tore open a package of fireproofed tinsel and draped the silvery strands over the tree. It was not until he was finished and the ornament box put away that he realized that the bare back of the tree was reflected in the mirror against which it stood. "Matt, you damn idiot," he said to himself, appraising his mistake. "Miss Anderson could have done a better job." He made a fist and rapped on his forehead with the heel of his hand. "Oh, Lord!" He went back to the fireplace to get his drink.

He punched a button on the large stereo console, and almost instantly a choir roared "Gloria!" The noise startled Matt. He fumbled for the volume tuner and the voices were subdued.

From the coffee table he took the gift-wrapped bottle and a stack of other presents and put them around the tree. He had to make two trips; there were so many. He had another cup of egg nog and lit the candles on the dining table. Then he turned out the lights and sat back in his chair to wait for midnight and the party.

* * * * *

"We saw three ships come sailing in, come sailing in, come sailing in; we saw three ships come sailing in, on Christmas day in the mor-ning," joyfully sang the voices from the stereo.

Matt opened his eyes. Two of the candles had burned out, but by the light of the others he could still see the clock. Twelve-twenty. He got up and walked over to it. Twelve-twenty. No. Four o'clock. Even as he shook his head in surprise, the musical chimes rang four times. "It's Christmas Day in the morning, all right," he said in answer to the radio. Time to get up and see what Santa brought.

On the bar, the egg nog had separated into heavy yellow liquid and colorless foam. He dipped the ladle into it and was able to capture only the foam. "Aaach!" He lifted the bowl and poured from its curved edge. More egg nog dripped onto the drainboard than into his cup before he had filled it, and he emptied the cup in one gulp.

On the carpet beneath the tree he saw a piece of tinsel. He looked around, and then, with his shoe, pushed and scraped the tinsel into the corner between the sideboard and the wall. He smiled. From the stack of presents, he picked a small one that was perched on top. It was carelessly wrapped and the paper was torn here and there from Scotch tape, as though it had been used before. The ribbon too looked as though it had formerly

tied some other gift. Matt read the card aloud. "To my darling husband. It brings good luck. Maggie." He folded it and stuck it back into the smudged envelope. Carefully, he pried off the white ribbon and the dark green foil, which looked wrinkled enough to have come originally on a flower pot. He laid these on the dining table and gently worked the lid off the box. Inside, on a mound of cotton, lay a large silver money clip made from a St. Christopher medal. Maggie's mother was Catholic, and she had given it to her daughter when Maggie first started driving. After Matt got the Buick last winter, Maggie wanted to give it to him. Matt shook his head and closed the box. Maggie rarely made mistakes.

The next present was wrapped in the same green foil with white ribbon, but it was a long, narrow roll like an Italian bread-stick rather than a box. The card was like the first except that it read, "To Dad, from Mike," in very clumsy block printing. Matt unwound the ribbon and unrolled the paper. Inside lay a red plastic pea-shooter with the Woolworth's gummed price tag still attached. Nineteen cents.

Matt smiled. Mike had said it was to hit Miss Anderson's "cedar" with. She'd only been working for him a week then, but Mike had sized her up right away. Mike had been a smart kid, all right. I laughed when he gave it to me last year, Matt thought, but you know, it doesn't seem such a silly idea now. Think I'll leave it out. Thanks, Mike. Matthew Michael Norton, Junior.

Matt took all the presents except the whiskey and two large packages and put them on the dining table. All these packages were approximately the same size, and they were all wrapped in the same red and gold paper. In the same writing, all the tags read, "To Matt, from Santa Claus."

He unwrapped them all; they were books. When the rumpled pile of wrapping paper at his feet became too large, he carried it over to the fireplace and wadded it into balls which he stashed in different crannies around the logs in the andiron. He threw in a match and the red and gold paper turned black and shriveled.

Carrying three at a time, Matt took the books over to the bookcase built into the wall and shoved them into their places. Volume Two of Shakespeare to the right of Volume One. Winter, 1957, of the Reader's Digest between Fall of '57 and Spring of '58.

After he had put them all away, he returned to the sideboard. "For Mike," he said, pushing the first box back against the mirror. It was an electric train; just what he had said he wanted, so he could take business trips, too--just like his dad. The other box was very large, but Maggie would have had no trouble lifting it or opening it. Not once she knew about the mink coat inside.

Matt looked up and into the mirror. "Do you know, Maggie? Do you know that I got you that coat?"

He looked away from his face. The tall, squared box in the mani-colored foil stood waiting for him to open it. He hesitated and then went over to his desk. From the top, right-hand drawer, he took a well-fingered tag and attached it to the present. In Maggie's writing it read, "Merry Christmas, Matt, from Maggie and Mike." The package looked almost the same as last year's now.

He opened the wrapping and tapped his fingernail against the cut glass decanter. "Very pretty," he said aloud and reached below in the sideboard for a glass. He poured it half full with the amber whiskey and lifted the glass to the tree, and to his reflection, and to the two large boxes beneath it. "Cheers," he said.

Timelessness

As you round the curb again

As you round the curb

You are in love

And the old leaves

Blow heat into your tears

Your feet are more than your thoughts

And a sudden sky with ocean salt

is in your eyes

In your eyes

In the timeless steps

That stride from curb to curb.

Jane Tess Davis

Ed. note: *We regret that Jane Tess Davis was not listed as the author of her poem* Moles, *which appeared in our fall issue.*

Death Flight

Seagulls wheel in winter wind, crying
to dunes cut with green-bitter reeds.
In their free-winged, grey-black selves their needs
are easily satisfied. Down-sweep, the flying
graceful forms point at fish lying
close to the top of the sea. Scale-silver leads
the gulls toward life shimmering with bright beads
of grey-green churned white with dying.
A hawk wheels above in the summer sky.
High-pitched shrills glance from rising cliffs
warning small creatures that his is the way
of the hunter. They are the prey--they will die
soon, when the hawk folds his wings, lifts,
then slashes down, sharp, clean, to slay.

T. Jeanette Kroger

Seagull's Song

Sharon Curran

"What do you think!" sang a young seagull,
Who was waggish and gay and free,
"It is a secret, of course, and you must not tell,"
Then he nodded mysteriously:
"Old Mother Ocean wears petticoats--
Look at the surf and see!"

"Look at them, so fluffy and white,
Just as white as they can be;
And hear them swishing all day long,
A-swishing happily,
Old Mother Ocean wears petticoats--
Look at the surf and see!"

And the last I saw of that frolicsome bird,
He was chuckling with impish glee;
"It doesn't seem proper at all," he said,
"And it shocks my modesty.
Old Mother Ocean wears petticoats--
Look at the surf and see!"

If It Weren't for the Sugar I've Been Cravin'

Jane Luecke

The morning was cold. The wind lightly whipped the dust in swirls along the road. Here and there a hemlock tree whistled its leaves. Delia pulled the shawl closer around her shoulders.

Through the gap in the mountains the yellow of the first rays of sunlight stretched toward the sky. It was about six o'clock. She had been walking along this road for almost an hour and her legs were beginning to ache. She stopped at a flat rock close to the side of the road and sat down. The rock was cold. She twisted her fingers in the folds of the shawl for warmth.

"Seems like I've been trudgin' a long way. Sure wish Hollow Patch weren't such a far piece. I should get all my things from one of them catalogues. 'Cept takes such a powerful long time—and you can't get sugar. I wouldn't go to town if it weren't for the sugar I've been cravin'. That sugar can take care of a heap of ills."

She looked down at her dusty leather shoes, now scuffed and worn. They were new only five months before. She had been proud of them. Such things were a luxury for people around these parts.

"Why I used to keep my shoes for three years when I lived at home. Didn't have to work so hard then. Didn't have to work so hard when he was here too. . ."

Suddenly she bent forward and wiped the dust from her shoes. She took special care to clean every crevice, as if she enjoyed the task—or needed it.

Then, sliding forward on the rock, she stood and started on foot down the road once again. The sun was beginning to rise. The grey of the bushes and trees and prairie dust began to take on color.

"Sure wish I could afford a can of paint for the house. The paint's cracklin' on the wall. It takes a heap of want to come home to those walls. Folks should take care of their homes, I reckon. But I'm the only one who sees it."

Delia walked faster. She kicked the small pebbles that got in the way of her shoes.

A few clouds were forming towards the north. The wind began to blow harder. A tumbleweed spun and bounced across the road.

"Hope that's not a rain cloud formin'. I'll never make it to town and back before it starts to pour."

She walked faster and numbered her fingers as she reviewed the list of things she had to buy.

"Sugar, flour, lard...string. Hope I can carry everything. This canvas bag'll help a might. My strength's built up with the harvest. Wish I had a mule though. Jess Howard usually has one at the livery stable."

A smile formed on her lips as she thought. "Jess and me were friends when we were kids. We used to play hide-and-seek in the hayloft. I wonder if he'd..."

Then her smile faded.

"No. Jess turned on me too. I'd never seen Jess so all-fired up. I'd never seen anyone so angry, so many angry, so many screamin', tearin', beatin'..."

Delia nervously tore at her bag. She bit her lip and reviewed the list once again.

The road turned. The sun shone brightly, blindingly. She squinted. Checking its position, she figured that it was about ten o'clock.

"Hollow Patch shouldn't be much further. Yes, there's Hank Fowler's place over there. Oh, it'll be good to set down."

She pummeled her skirts to set the dust free. Rubbing her hands, she checked her nails and bent her fingers in embarrassment.

"I wanted to look decent. It took me all last evenin' to wash up. A body can't keep clean in these parts."

She smoothed her hair and pulled her bonnet forward. It was growing warmer, and she loosened her shawl and let it fall over one arm.

"Look at my shoes. They're as dusty as before. Hope my dress'll cover them.

"Hope—if I could count the times I've said hope or wish or some word which asks for what isn't. If you could wish the dead back, he'd be here and this time I'd make him happy. Then he wouldn't...then we wouldn't have to do the things we did. But I'm askin' for something that isn't. Yet...as long as I can't have that, I wish that I could and they could forget what was."

Delia stopped at the top of the hill. There below her lay the town of Hollow Patch. It was a small town. The important businesses lined up next to each other and formed the one main street--Mel Peter's General Store, Jess' Livery Stable, the saloons, Miss Pinkerton's Dressmaking Shop, Hang Chou's Laundry, the Empire Hotel, and Reverend Geoffrey Perkins' Church.

"I remember how skeerd I was of Revrund Perkins when I was a youngun. Matter a' fact, I still am. Why on my weddin' day. On my weddin' day..."

She choked and tried to swallow the tears welling up inside. Through blurred eyes she frantically searched for anything, anything of the present.

"Look there's a new house in town. There's writin' out front."

Her eyes cleared and she saw the sign "Mrs. Sterling's Home-cooked Meals."

"I'm hungry. Haven't had a bite since early this mornin'."

Delia started down the hill and slowly approached the main street of Hollow Patch.

Life in the town seemed to be as it always was. Children were splashing playfully in the horse troughs. Old men, resting their chairs against the frame front of the general store, talked politics and exchanged fish stories. Men leaned on hitching posts, slouched on bar rails, stood in line before the surveyor's office. Women ambled through the general store, exchanged gossip over the canned peaches, and scolded playful children. Nothing looked as if it had changed since she had been there last.

The boards of the walk rumbled as she stepped onto the limits of Hollow Patch. She looked down.

"I should've left those shoes at home. I should've come barefoot. No one would care anyway. At least, then I wouldn't cause a ruckus."

She strained to step lightly, but the boards' thunder seemed to grow louder. She passed the general store. The old men sat upright but kept their silent eyes to the ground. Young men at the hitching posts turned their backs and stopped talking. The water splashing and the corner gossip ceased.

Delia forced a faint smile. Her legs grew tense. She sighted Mrs. Sterling's restaurant and crossed the street to the door.

Through the window she saw three men sitting at a table in the corner. She recognized one; it was Jess. Opening the door, she stepped inside and closed it softly behind her. She stood and stared at the table, but Jess did not look up, just kept on eating.

"Look's like he's workin' powerful hard at eatin' that soup."

She stood there, waiting. Jess kept his eyes on the bowl before him. Turning, she walked to a table on the other side of the room.

Mrs. Sterling came out of the kitchen carrying a pot of coffee. She noticed Delia, smiled, and walked to her table. She set the coffee pot down and wiped her hands on her apron.

"What'll you have?" said Mrs. Sterling. "The beef stew is very good today. Fact is, we don't have much else that's good."

Delia shifted the fork on the table before her. "Stew's fine," she said, "and could you bring me a cup of coffee too?"

Mrs. Sterling walked toward the kitchen. Just then Jess got up and motioned for her. They talked for a few minutes. Delia could see that Jess did most of the talking.

When he had finished, Mrs. Sterling turned to Delia again. This time she was frowning. "We're all out of stew." she said. "Sorry. You'll have to go somewhere else."

Delia understood. She set the fork in place, stood, and walked away from the scent of homecooking.

Outside the noon sun blazed down on the parched street. Horses shifted nervously and hoofed the dust around the posts. Delia hesitated at the door. She fought the impulse to turn back.

"They hate me--because of him. Seems like all their hate should've been spent that night five months ago. But the way all of them look at me or turn their backs on me or... Do they know?"

Her hand clutched the knob. Slowly she turned it and stepped down to the boardwalk. The door closed. She stood facing the street of Hollow Patch. Most of the shops were closed now. The shades were drawn and the keepers had gone home to their noon meal. Only the saloons and the general store remained open to house their permanent customers.

"I've got to go to the general store and get that sugar. Then I can go. I'd leave this town now, if it weren't for the sugar..."

The old men were still seated on the porch of the general store. They looked up now and stared. Delia tried to ignore them as she walked into the dusty street. She weakened as she reached the steps. Her eyes followed her skirts as they brushed swiftly past the rockers.

Mel Peters was stacking jars of preserves on a shelf facing the back wall of the store. The counter was cluttered with green tinted cure-all bottles. Four men lounged around a pot-bellied stove playing checkers on a pickle barrel.

Mel was talking as he worked at the shelf.

"Yep. That's what Seth told me. She's here in town. I didn't know she was still alive. She acted too crazed to live. Thought she was gonna kill herself or someone the night of the..." One of the men cut him off saying, "Better be quiet. She's here now."

Mel looked up.

Delia measured her steps to the counter. She had heard Mel. But she strained to turn her mind to other things, to days long ago when she had skipped up to this counter, to days when her only concern was the candy jar and the new penny she had earned. These thoughts were much pleasanter, pleasanter than ropes, angry men,...

"What do you want?" Mel's words brought her back to this day and this counter littered with cure-all bottles tinted green.

"Hello, Mel," Delia murmured.

Mel said nothing.

Faltering she continued. "I'd...I'd like to get me some lard, flour, salt, pepper....string,..."

"Surprised she doesn't want a coil of rope instead," muttered one of the checker players.

Delia's knees stiffened. Her hands clenched, as fear and hurt mounted. Finally she could control herself no longer.

Her tears fell in droplets on the green bottles and browned the wood of the counter. With red eyes she looked towards the men. Their cold, steady stare met her. Her voice roughened as she cried.

"That coil of rope. That took my man five months ago. You punished us then. Why do you hafta keep on? Dontcha know it's hell livin' like this? Lynchin's kinder than this..."

The men sat unmoved. Mel was indifferent as he loaded the order into the canvas bag.

"Anything else?"

Delia choked and mumbled. "There's one thing...I'd like... Never mind. I got all I got comin', I reckon."

She reached into her pocket and moved her hand nervously along the lining. She felt the pin, unfastened the paper fold, and laid the wrinkled bill on the counter. Mel grabbed it and counted out her change.

She picked up the money and the bag and walked to the porch. The old men had left their chairs now. Delia stood and looked over the vacant street. One man looked back. It was Judge Macomb. He stared from the window of the courthouse. Delia paled at his appearance.

"He's got a mournin' band on his sleeve. Five months now. It's easier for a man alone. But a woman, a woman needs a man."

She fixed her eyes to the band on the sleeve. "But...she must have been very dear to him...Dear to him like he was dear to me. I guess we learned, didn't we, Judge, that a weddin' band is no protection against..."

She abruptly dropped the bag, turned, and walked to the edge of the porch. Her face flushed with anger. "I needed him and I couldn't have him as long as she was around. A young, pretty girl is fetchin'--with her flouncy skirts, all silky, and lace, and sweet water."

She rubbed her hands back and forth across her thick hips. The rough skin caught the threads on her skirt. She held her palms open before her eyes. "I'm not fetchin'. Farm work don't make a woman fetchin'. But it shouldn't kill love. I still loved him. She didn't--fun was all she wanted. How I hated her, and then...I couldn't stand it anymore. That's why I had to..."

She buried her eyes in her palms and sobbed. "Why did they have to kill him? I wanted to tell them the truth, but that wouldn't have stopped them. I was alone. A woman alone can't stand up to all of them..."

Impulsively she looked back to the courthouse window. "Why is he starin' at me like that? Does he know? No--he only hates."

She tried to steady herself on a rocker and breathed deeply as she drew her head back proudly. "Yes, Judge, I hate too. I hate the life and the lie--because I know. It would be better if they knew too, but who's to tell them? A woman alone can't

stand up to all of them."

Her hand slipped from the back of the rocker as she let her eyes fall to the ground.

"My shoes, they're dirty again. I tried to keep them clean. Wanted to look good for the town. But the dust, guess there's as much dust in Hollow Patch as outside. Funny, I never thought there was."

A shadow fell across her feet. Looking up, she saw the sun begin to go behind a cloud. Her skirt ruffled and the chairs clattered as the wind blew them against the frames of the store. Delia drew her shawl around her shoulders. She walked to the canvas bag, lifted it and stood on the steps of the porch. Glancing to the right, she saw Mrs. Sterling arranging the evening menu in the window. The checker men were laughing at one of Mel's corny railroad jokes. Their bawdy laughter trailed out into the street.

Delia was walking now--in the middle of the dusty street. She left Mrs. Sterling's, the general store, and the courthouse behind. She passed Mrs. Pinkerton's, Hang Chou's, the Empire Hotel,...

The wind was gathering force as she approached the livery stable. She stopped and rested the canvas bag against her leg. The corners of her shawl flapped at her arms and slapped her face. Horses neighed inside. Jess was not there.

"Wouldn't make a difference anyhow. Must be still settin' in the corner over at Mrs. Sterling's."

She bent to lift the bag. It seemed heavier. "Funny thing I didn't get the sugar. Probably couldn't have carried it anyhow. Guess I didn't crave it as much as I thought."

The wind blew harder and kicked up dust at her heels. She bent her head and hunched her shoulders for protection. Alone, Delia walked the dusty road that led out of the town of Hollow Patch.

Come, My Son

But father, the night is cold,
And the bed I left was warm.
My son, this night is not like others;
Tonight a king was born.

But father, my legs are tired,
And the road is dark and long.
My son, the comfort is before us,
Knowing that he has come.

But father, it's shepherds we are,
With no gifts to give this king.
My son, this king is not like others;
The gift is his to bring.

But father, in truth I'm afraid
To be with this mighty one.
My son, he comes to serve not rule;
Tonight your king was born.

Mary Ann Stocker

Ghosts in Eliot's Four Quartets

Sr. Raymond Marie, C.S.J.

T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* are haunted. Ghosts, in one form or another, conduct us through the poems, even though we sometimes must strain to see and hear what is just beyond the horizon of vision and the limits of hearing. This is often the case in the *Quartets*, for these human spectres are nebulous and fleeting images. Literary critics recognize their haunting presence throughout the poems, but the number of allusions to ghosts is disputable.

In this paper I will identify certain encounters with the ghost world in each Quartet that show how these apparitions move us through a Christian's life, progressing from what might have been and what has been to what is now, and what will be in the end. We find this four-phased time pattern in a recurring line of the first *Quartet*, "Burnt Norton."

> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.[1]

Carrying out this theme of progression, the unseen people and children in the garden of "Burnt Norton" reflect "what might have been," although their actual words elude us. In "East Coker" the historical figures of village merrymakers emphasize man's affinity to this world through the repetition of "what has been." "Dry Salvages" sustains us with a realization of what is now man's state as depicted by two types of wayfarers met in the third poem. The disembodied souls who once prayed in the chapel of "Little Gidding" summon us to an eternal union with God, our "one end."

In the deserted rose-garden of "Burnt Norton" we have a strong sensation of not being alone. Besides the speaker's words echoing, "My words echo / Thus, in your mind," we are told, "Other echoes / Inhabit the garden " (BN 1). These echoes draw us "into our first world" which could be either a vague vision of Adam and Eve or of the people who might have inhabited this burnt house. "There they were, dignified, invisible,/ Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves " (BN 1).

[1]T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 13. All references to the *Quartets* are taken from this publication.

The word "dignified" supports the idea that these people are poised and adult-like, not to be confused with the children whom we meet later hidden in the foliage.

We can be certain that spirits are present in the garden for "The voice of the bird calls," in response to the "unheard music" in the shrubbery; the unseen figures must be there, "for the roses had the look of flowers that are looked at."[2] "Our guests" after moving in "formal pattern" see their past potentiality, "what / they / might have been," reflected in the pool "until the cloud passed" and reality returned. Again the pool was as empty as their unfulfilled possibilities. The bird bids us "Go...for the leaves were full of children, / Hidden excitedly, containing laughter." Perhaps it could be said that the vision of the children in the garden suggests man's state of innocence before the pattern of perfect relationship between God and himself was darkened by the clouds of sin. We are reminded that this is "what might have been."

Approaching reality we are beckoned into "East Coker," a landscape full of human history and alive with the natural activities which are governed by the passing of the seasons. An immediate historical vision of the dead villagers "dancing around the bonfire" exemplifies for us "what has been." Eliot traces the influence of this particular choice of imagery to his recollections of reading *Germelshausen*, which is a story:

> in which a whole parish is punished by the Pope's interdict. It can neither live nor die. Once every hundred years it resumes for the space of one day its ghostly revelry and then sinks again into the earth.[3]

The dancing figures are described in words taken from Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governour*,[4] "In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie--... / Which betokeneth concorde " (EC 1).

[2]Elizabeth Drew, *T.S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 153.

[3]Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1950), p. 165.

[4]*Ibid.*

Symbolized in their dance are the rhythm and repetition of life and history as an "endless recurring succession of birth, growth, decay and death."[5]

> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
> Mirth of those long since under earth
> Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
> As in their living in the living seasons (EC 1).

Man is linked as an inseparable part of the natural world and its rhythmical pattern. From earliest times man has been known to hold a dance ceremony for the fertility of his crops. This practice illustrates his affinity to the earth.

As we strive to hold on to the past, "what has been," it slips from us, absorbed into the darkness of the present. "The dancers are all gone under the hill " (EC 2), proclaims the littleness of human endeavor and the inconsequence of the past.

This same sense of disillusionment is obvious in the ghostly passengers we find in the third *Quartet*. "Dry Salvages" classifies present-day man into two types of voyagers--those "sailing with real destination" and those "who think that they are voyaging " (DS 2) Eliot pictures the men having purpose in their lives in the metaphor of the fishermen setting out on their perilous voyages. They go over "an ocean not littered with wastage [into] a future that is not liable / Like the past, to have no destination" (DS 2). Their life has destiny and theirs is active effort, not just passive drifting.

The reverse attitude is cited a few lines later where we identify anonymous travelers on a train, "settled to fruit, periodicals," and other mundane affairs. Creatures of habit and of routine experience, they are "not escaping from the past / Into different lives, or into any future." Experiencing a sensation of going forward, "While the narrowing rails slide together behind you " (DS 3), we are soon made conscious that we cannot escape the past.

Our conduct of life now will be judged when we come to "port," to our "real destination."

[5]B. Rajan (ed.), *T.S. Eliot* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1958), p. 64.

O voyagers, O seamen,
You who come to port and whose bodies
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea
Or whatever event, this is your real destination
(DS 3).

The course of our life finds meaning only when our end is reached, when the temporal and the eternal meet at the "time of death which is every moment " (DS 3). And so, at the end of this section we are urged to persevere in our life's journey with the words, "Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers."

The goal of our journey appears in the "end" of all movement and action, in the final Cause, God. As we are invited to enter the restored chapel in "Little Gidding" we are struck with the central truth which any chapel commemorates, our redemption by Love. A disembodied voice instructs us to adopt a spirit of prayer which is the key to eternity. Through prayer we attain communion with the dead who once prayed here and are now part of eternity.[6]

And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the
language of living (LG 1).

Together with them we draw closer to our union with God, but first we must be "redeemed from fire by fire" of Love.

"With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling " (LG 5), we end our journey and arrive where we started. Full illumination is reached in a state of complete simplicity and innocence symbolized in the voices of "children in the apple-tree." Here we experience a completion of that glimpsed vision in the garden of "Burnt Norton."

Using the ghost images as our guides through the *Four Quartets*, we have progressed with man from his first possible state of life and his actual past and present situations to his final end in God.

[6]Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 285.

Just High Enough the Walls

Michelle Lundborg

The twelve of us were born where we lived, behind the store. I was Tatone's son, the first of many sons. All during those years, those hard years, I remember sitting at the scarred round wood table, pasting the Sunday comics on big sheets of white wrapping paper--paper Tatone used to wrap big roasts and swirls and swirls of sausage in. Sitting there I would wait to hear a baby scream, and to see Tatone stride out of the bedroom, grinning about his new son. And after that happened, after the waiting and the smell of all that paste, Tatone would hoist me to his shoulder, the right one usually, and he'd carry me into the store where we'd raise the shades and unlock the door. And I would dust the cans, or sweep the floor, and Tatone would sharpen the big knives. And soon then the women would come, fat and Italian most of them, with bulging change purses and shrill voices.

"So hey Guiseppi, another new son for you, hey? That's a quite a few now, Guisep. E Maria, come sta Maria?"

And Tatone would grin, and answer, and put an extra pound of sausage in their packages, or an extra wedge of cheese. After Tatone had another son.

And this happened every year, for twelve years. And the bread men, they grinned and winked at Tatone, and nodded their approval.

"Guiseppi," they would say, "Guiseppi--what a family that a Guiseppi he's a got. Fine sons. Fine sons."

And Father Polazzi from church, at every baptism, would smile at all of us lined up like steps. He would slap Tatone's back, and show his gold fillings with his big smile. And then Father would smile, not so broadly, at Mama, and take her hand, and say something to her, softly, in Italian. And Mama would smile, wisely somehow, and reassure the white bundle in her arms.

It was good to have brothers in those days. While the meat grinder grated, and Tatone chopped at the huge pieces of meat, and Mama weighed the fruit and laughed with the women, my brothers and I would sneak jawbreakers while sweeping, and

chase the toads in the vacant lot when we were supposed to be mowing the grass in the back yard.

Smells were good then too. It depended on where you were in the store whether you were smelling the sticky warmness of of fruits, or the sharp, searing burn of long green and red peppers--which we often enjoyed before breakfast.

We conquered every tree in the neighborhood and subdued every dog. At least once in every day the women would lean out their kitchen windows and scream at us when we would run through their yards, all of us, trampling their zinnias.

"Hey--Tony! Hey--Paulo! Go on now--go on home! What a you--delinquents? Go on now."

And we would laugh, and run off, and grow more brown in the sun.

Soon, very soon, most of us were grown up. We had grown tall, and Mama would have to look up at us, and lift her arm high to scold us by shaking the sauce covered spoon at us.

"Hey Tony--c'mon a now--it's a for supper. Not a now. Go on, go on and bother Papa."

And Tatone and Mama began, almost imperceptibly, to age. They grew old as all Italian men and women grow old. More grey than black hair, more weight, more Italian than English, less gesture, less shouting, more tenderness, more explicit love.

And so it was when we waited for the cry in the back of the store for the last time. The eleven of us sat there, the little ones pasting comics on long sheets of wrapping paper, waiting for Tatone to tell us of his new son. For a son it had to be. And was.

There was a longer wait after the cry the last time, but as always, Tatone came out smiling.

"The bambino," he said, "he's a here. Mama and me, we call the bambino Guiseppi, after me. I think it's a be the last for Mama and me. His name, it's a gotta be Guisep."

And he went into the store, raised the shades, and sharpened the big knives.

The baby was the last one. And his name was Guiseppi, after Tatone. But second generation that we were, the boys and I called him JoeJoe.

When that night had gone by, and most of the next day, and we still hadn't seen the new son as we had seen all the others, we began to question Tatone. Mama never stayed in the bedroom

with the door closed for so long a time before. Tatone brushed off our questions.

"Mama," he said, "she's a tired."

But that night as Tatone was closing the store, we decided to greet the new son once and for all. One by one we filled Mama's room.

Only a candle burned before the image of the Virgin, so it was hard at first to see Mama lying there, in the bed, holding JoeJoe, the last son, who had no arms.

We stood there, the eleven of us, surrounding the bed. We were silent, very silent, and it was Mama who finally spoke.

"Guiseppi, he's a fine baby no? Look at a his eyes, so brown, so nice. He's a look like a his Papa, no? This a baby...this a baby..." and her voice broke and her body tightened under the sheet, "this a baby is just a like you boys. This a baby is a handsome, he's a nice, just a like my other sons. Help his Papa, he cut a the meat. Nice a baby. Come bello. Come bello."

She lay there crooning to JoeJoe who made no sound. And as we stood there, the eleven of us, we knew without her saying any more to us that JoeJoe was her last son, her perfect son; yet another son to extend over the back fence, smiling. We knew that JoeJoe was a son as we were sons; he must be a brother as we were brothers. Nothing made him different. Everything made him ours.

We never spoke of the deformity; Mama took him to no doctor--none of us had ever seen a doctor. Besides, to her, nothing was wrong. JoeJoe, the last, perfect son.

Tatone never spoke of it either. To JoeJoe he was tender and kind. To JoeJoe, the last, perfect son.

JoeJoe grew from babyhood and began to grow tall. Mama no longer had time to weigh the fruit and argue with the women. All of her time was spent with JoeJoe, helping him, loving him, training him. Every second her presence said to the child, "Last perfect son. Perfect. Normal, healthy, like the other sons. How lovely you are. How good."

And I don't think, for all those months, those four years that JoeJoe ever realized he was different. He wanted for nothing.

Gently we would play with him. I would sit there, on the floor with him, watching him laugh as he would struggle to pick up the blocks with his feet. And suddenly, the room would kaleidoscope and my mind would scream at him--"See see see you're different different different. Why can't you understand.

Different. You're different. Different."

But JoeJoe never, never realized it. All those months the dark eyes only laughed, and loved us, Tatone who was tender, Mama, who was loving.

And always, through those long months, to the shrill voiced women, Mama would say, "No Marie--he's asleep. Poor baby. He plays a so hard. That a baby--so strong. So nice. Maybe domani Marie you see him. Not a now. He's asleep."

I know the women knew. I don't know how, except that women silently communicate pain and sorrow that is somehow unspeakable. They knew, but they spared Mama.

Tatone spoke often of his last, perfect son, but never did he hoist him to his shoulder to raise the shades, or shout at at him to get away from the apples.

And JoeJoe grew.

Mama would put him out in the sun, in the back yard. He would sit in the sand box whose sides were too high for him to scramble over. Whose sides were too high for people to see in. And JoeJoe would play in the sun, by himself, brown eyes wide and laughing while we tore around the block and ruined Mrs. Lombardi's zinnias.

I would come up to him sometimes, by myself, and tousle his soft hair and talk to the wide brown eyes.

"Hi JoeJoe JoeJoe. Come sta JoeJoe?" And I would sprinkle sand on his feet, tickling him, all the while my mind mumbling that not always would the side of the box be too high, not always, not always. And JoeJoe would shriek at the tickling sensation.

It was when JoeJoe was nearly five. He was out in the sand box, playing alone. Mama was inside, humming, sewing. She was making his birthday present--a sort of coat with no sleeves in it--a coat of brilliant vertical stripes. The stripes spoke of noise and games.

"See, Tony," she said, "see the coat for Guiseppi. Look at the nice colors. So pretty on my pretty boy."

"Mama," I said, "why a coat for JoeJoe? Why a coat?"

"Why not Tony--he's a baby--he's a get cold like a any other baby---"

"Stop it Mama. Stop it stop it stop it," I screamed. "He hasn't got arms, Mama. No arms no arms no arms."

The flat of her hand hit my face so hard that I staggered and fell. I picked myself up and stared at her, not saying anymore, not even crying.

Her dark eyes bored into mine.

"Tony, go help Papa. Go on. Now." And she picked the striped material from the floor where she had dropped it, and began again to sew on the coat.

I backed out of the room still looking at her.

In the store, with Tatone, with nothing but the shrill voices of the women, and the sharp cheese smell, and the soft whirr of the big refrigerator, I forgot about the walls not being high enough...high enough.

We had the party for JoeJoe that night. We ate and we sang, and JoeJoe's brown eyes widened when he saw the colors of the coat as Mama put it on him. He laughed and kissed her. Mama began to cry, and in happiness, all of us jumped up from our places and threw our arms around Mama, and hugged her. Suddenly JoeJoe stopped laughing and stared. And it was at that moment, as we all hugged her, that he first realized. In his baby way, he looked down at himself, and then at us. Down at himself and then at us.

And there was no more shouting. We broke away from Mama, and stepped back slowly and quietly. JoeJoe began to scream. He threw himself on the floor and kicked, screaming and screaming. He must have realized then why he was the only one of us Mama ever fed, the only one Mama bathed, the only one who played blocks with his feet. He screamed.

Terrified, Mama ran to him and picked the struggling child up. She spoke softly to him, and carried him into the bedroom, closing the door behind her.

Tatone got up and went into the store. We began to clear the dishes in silence.

Quietly we went to bed, hearing JoeJoe's now subdued whimperings through the closed door.

The next day, Mama put the striped coat on him to please him, and herself, and sat him down in the sand box. She left him alone to help Tatone in the store.

It was when I was grating the cheese for Mrs. Fucinni that we heard one of the boys scream. We ran out to the back yard, Mama with a wild look on her face.

Tatone never let Mama see the huge cuts on JoeJoe's head; cuts from pounding his baby head again and again and again. The walls were just high enough for JoeJoe.

He just lay there, with blood on the striped coat, brown eyes staring. No sound except Mama's screams from inside the house. Nothing to see except the blood on the striped coat. On my brother Joseph.

Sheila Le Blanc

e.e. and me

lament for a
smith-corona

mr. cummings has one up on me
his is published poetry
his lines go d$_{o_{w_n}}$ or up to s$^{p^{a^{c^e}}}$
or dribble off without a trace
of ink
^{o}r anything
but i have one that he can't claim
this crazy poem that bears his name
my cummings print obeys no line,
meanders u^{p} and d$_{o_{w_n}}$ the spaces
causes eyestrain, nervous tension,
leaves some letters with no traces
of ink
^{o}r anything
my budding genius soon will stop
when cummings type goes to the shop
i'll then compose obedient verse,
watch my lines and my spaces
be unpublished in this world
and when i die i'll leave no traces
of ink
^{o}r anything

There are all kinds of epiphanies, and some come much slower than others. Interlude is of the more gradual variety.

Interlude

Camille Esselle

Tell

Adlai walked into the long corridor. He was afraid of long places that were not open, and had closed roofs. The plane carrying his fiancee would arrive in three minutes--barely enough time to get down the modern, humming, deserted corridor to the runway. He had always been shy and afraid.

July, his fiancee, was gay and an extrovert. She had never liked his lack of nerve. He sure did have a problem, she told him repeatedly when she would bring him his tonic and bitters from the drugstore and nurse him, during his frequent winter colds. She was returning after a month away, visiting relatives supposedly, but actually thinking of their engagement. For once, she was hesitant, even as Adlai. He would show her he was forceful, though--all month, alone, he had been practicing forcefulness. When July disembarked she would see a new man--the very first thing he would run to her and grab her and take her breath away with his sheer forcefulness. But first, there was the corridor....

Show

"Flight 342 arriving, Gate 12, from Illinois." The voice echoed from a box near the roof, reverberated through the corridor whose blank and white and longness...."It's like steel," he thought, "cold and strong and sharp." He unzipped his parka eight notches of the zipper in jerks, then zipped it up again. The ceiling loomed high. Blue-white morning light entered uniform windows boned in steel. He felt stifled as he looked down the corridor, then out to the runway white against the greyed sky. 7:22--at 7:25 the stairway would be rolled onto the field, a small orange cart would putt from beneath the building and with tractor-like smooth bustling, circle once for form, then wind out to the luggage. The conveyor belt would carry it down securely from the belly of the plane. Probably

there would be humming. Now all visible was a lone man wearing a grey uniform, at the end of the corridor, by the gate. There was no sound. Adlai looked at his watch, 7:23--new black leather band. July had hated the other, he remembered "Oh, Adlai, expansions are so dumb," when he had taken it off to show her its jewels but instead she had noticed the pink indentations, chainlike on his white wrist. 7:23--and her plane in two minutes would land, two minutes to walk down the corridor. He turned, but no child or adult was behind him, only in the lobby a sleepy lady selling cigars. The uniformed man glanced at him, Adlai glanced at his watch but thought of July--how could blondes be so different? "Oh, Adlai, you should find yourself a brunette," she had once said, but the ocean was freezing and it was only May, and he caught colds. 7:24. Tonic and bitters from the drugstore, she would bring him tonic and bitters and not take the quarter he offered from beneath his quilt. Smell of camphor--no, it was oil, from the runway and planes that swooped in like hawks...hawks. More like a jaybird he stood there cold--the ceiling was high. The corridor was narrow. The guard smugly glanced again--he had dark hair, and his head almost reached to the top of the entry. He'd probably laugh if Adlai walked down the smooth aisle and slipped--or coughed. It was perfectly normal to cough, but that guard would laugh. The roar of the engines came loud now, 7:25. July with her gold hair and gold-ringed diamond--she'd keep the diamond, he knew...even if he didn't run down the aisle, and grab her.

Autumn Leaf

A golden leaf

Wished liberty,

Fell,

And dying, blew away.

Toni Turner

Cinquain

Roof-tiles

are brick-colored

curves of protective clay,

sun-baked, wind-dried to keep all the

rain out.

T. Jeanette Kroger

Monday, November 25, 1963

Camille Esselle

Pomegranate, split, lies on a brown saucer...
not split, gashed--a slash across its curve reveals
brilliant seeds, plump-tight to bursting but not touched,
and clustered, they restrain their juice-fill to
compact compartments, within the dull striped skin.

A girl sits on a striped couch, newspaper folded open
in her lap, broken shells falling steadily to the paper
as she cracks walnuts she takes from a brown paper sack
on the floor. She places the nutmeats in a clear glass
jar beside her, where they form a small mound, the cracked
shells gathering in wide flatness on the newspaper.
Steadily she cracks the walnuts breaking their shells
with the two steel arms of the nutcracker...
sound of snare drums, steady, as she cracks the nuts.

We spread our breakfast toast with preserves--strawberry,
and its bright redness gleaming, pectin-like in parts,
in parts small yellow seeds glistening--the coffee in
mugs is thick from boiling too long, and steamier than
coffee on a sunny day should be, though the morning is cold.

Moonlight Loneliness

Wan Willow,

Why do you finger the

Foamy water's edge, and hang

Heavy-hearted looking into your own

Wrinkled face?

Eileen Miller